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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 003628

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/15/2018  
TAGS: PGOV PHUM PINR SOCI RS TI  
SUBJECT: RECENT VIOLENCE AND ECONOMIC WOES SEND TAJIKS  
PACKING IN DROVES

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Alice G. Wells; reason 1.4  
(d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The recent murder and decapitation near Moscow of an ethnic Tajik guest worker has added to the insecurity among the ethnic Tajik community whose low-wage, low-skill jobs have been the first casualties of the economic downturn here. The leader of an NGO assisting the Tajik community told us the number of Tajiks heading home has increased and she expected a greater number of attacks on this vulnerable group community in the coming months. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) An obscure nationalist group has claimed responsibility for the December 5 murder and beheading of a 20-year old Tajik guest-worker whose head was subsequently discovered December 10 in a dumpster near a metro station in western Moscow. Assailants attacked the victim, identified by the Kommersant newspaper as Salekh Azizov, as he and a co-worker left their jobs at a food warehouse in the town of Vidnoye south of Moscow. The co-worker escaped, but was later hospitalized with injuries. A group calling itself the Militant Organization of Russian Nationals sent e-mails with a photograph of the victim's severed head to the Sova Center and the Moscow Bureau for Human Rights, two Russian organizations that deal primarily with xenophobia and ultra-nationalist violence against ethnic minorities. According to a representative from Sova, the daily Komsomolskaya Pravda also received the e-mail. There has been little television coverage of the attack and its gruesome aftermath, although some newspapers and the independent radio Ekho-Moskviy have carried it.

¶3. (C) Ghokaev Zhurayeva, head of the NGO Tajikistan Foundation told us on December 12 that the number of Tajiks leaving Russia to go home is increasing and she does not expect them to return. Zhurayeva, whose husband once ran for president of Tajikistan, and the organization she heads handles a 24/7 hotline for the Tajik community. Most of her work focuses on labor migration issues, including documentation problems and attacks on migrant workers from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Moldova. She also warned that she expects the number of attacks and ultra-nationalism/extremism in general to increase in the coming months due to the worsening Russian economy. She said that all reserved seats on trains leaving Moscow for Tajikistan are fully booked through the end of December.

Comment

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¶4. (C) Zhurayeva and other mainstream human rights activists with whom we spoke had never heard of the group that has claimed responsibility for the murder. We will continue to monitor this group and Russian law enforcement's investigation of this crime.

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